



Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20554

03-123
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JUN 08 2005

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator
60 West Street, Suite 202
Annapolis, MD 21401-2448

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Senator Mikulski:

Thank you for your letter of April 25, 2005, to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC), on behalf of your constituent, Ms. Merime Ahmed, expressing her concerns regarding Video Relay Service (VRS), a form of telecommunications relay service (TRS). Your correspondence was forwarded to the Commission's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau for handling.

Ms. Ahmed's letter states that she sometimes has to wait 20 minutes to connect with a VRS operator and expresses the desire to use one piece of videophone equipment to contact several VRS providers.

Ms. Ahmed's concerns relate to two issues currently being considered by the FCC: interoperability of equipment used to access VRS and the "speed of answer" for VRS. On February 15, 2005, the California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling on Interoperability, requesting that the FCC prohibit any VRS provider that receives compensation from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund from purposely restricting its deaf and hard-of-hearing customers to a single VRS provider via the software or hardware of their VRS equipment or through exclusivity agreements with those customers. On March 1, 2005, the FCC released a Public Notice (DA 05-509) seeking public comment on this issue. Comments were due April 15, 2005, and reply comments were due May 2, 2005. The issue of interoperability will be addressed in a future order.

The Commission understands and shares Ms. Ahmed's concern over the amount of time sometimes needed to reach a VRS communications assistant. There is currently no speed of answer requirement mandating how quickly a VRS provider must answer an incoming VRS call. The Commission waived the application of its traditional speed of answer rule for VRS to allow providers to gain experience in their ability to handle VRS traffic. However, this issue is raised in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) the Commission released on June 30, 2004 (FCC 04-137). The Commission sought further comment on the speed of answer issue in a Public Notice released on February 8, 2005 (DA 05-339). The speed of answer issue for VRS will also be addressed in a future order.

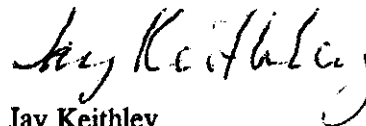
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The Commission has always been, and continues to be, supportive of the provision of VRS. We encourage Ms. Ahmed to actively participate in proceedings before the Commission to ensure that her opinions are expressed and considered fully. The Commission has available an e-mail service designed to apprise consumers about developments at the Commission, to disseminate consumer information materials prepared by the Commission to a wide audience, and to invite comments from other parties on Commission regulatory proposals. This free service enables consumers to subscribe to and receive FCC fact sheets, consumer brochures and alerts, and public notices, among other consumer information. To subscribe, Mr. Ahmed should visit the FCC Consumer Information Registry at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

The Commission also invites Ms. Ahmed to visit the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Internet web site at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb> or the Commission's Home Page located at <http://www.fcc.gov>.

A copy of Ms. Ahmed's correspondence has been placed in the public record for this proceeding. The Commission appreciates your inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jay Keithley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jay" and last name "Keithley" clearly distinguishable.

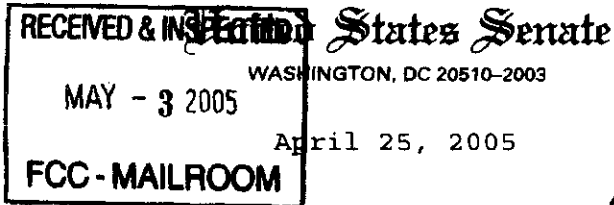
Jay Keithley
Deputy Bureau Chief
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

BARBARA A. MIKULSKI
MARYLAND

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS

HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS



Ms. Diane Atkinson
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs
445 12th Street, S.W., Room 8C453
Washington, D.C. 20554-2101

Dear Ms. Atkinson:

I would appreciate it if you would review the enclosed correspondence and would contact my office as soon as possible with the appropriate information to respond to my constituent.

Please send your response to the attention of my assistant, Denise Nooe, in my office at the address indicated above.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator

BAM:dgn

IN REPLY PLEASE REFER TO
OFFICE INDICATED:

- ☐ 1629 THAMES STREET, SUITE 400
BALTIMORE, MD 21231
(410) 962-4510
VOICE/TDD: (410) 962-4512
 - ☒ 60 WEST STREET, SUITE 202
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401-2448
(410) 263-1806
BALTIMORE: (410) 269-1650
 - ☐ 8404 IVY LANE, SUITE 406
GREENBELT, MD 20770-1407
(301) 345-5517
 - ☐ 84 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
HAGERSTOWN, MD 27140-4804
(301) 797-2826
 - ☐ SUITE 1E, BUILDING B
1201 PEMBERTON DRIVE
SALISBURY, MD 21801-2403
(410) 546-7711
- CEB*
pl/ccl
D/S/Ab.
qld

Merime Ahmed
4145 Garrett Park Rd
05 APR 18 PM 3:08 Silver Spring, MD 20906

April 11, 2005

RECEIVED
BALTIMORE

Barbara A. Mikulski
Brown's Wharf
1629 Thames Street
Suite 400
Baltimore, Maryland 21231

Dear Senator Barbara A. Mikulski,

I am writing to ask your help to improve Videophone Relay Service. I have written a letter to Federal Communications Commission and I have enclosed this letter for you.

The VP-100 means a machine that a person can use through internet connection and call another person. It is an useful machine for any deaf person because a deaf person can sign to the VP camera lens and she or he can see another person on the screen when she or he calls and signing with American Sign Language.

I think that we should use VP-100, and D- link both no matter what and can be able to talk to any VRS. It should be better to involve VP-100, and D- link, and VRS to work with one-way system. That's all easy to save time to connect up with each other. And add more VRS operators as there are few working now.

I hope that you will support us and solve this problem.

Sincerely yours,


Merime Ahmed

Merime Ahmed
4145 Garrett Park Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20906

April 11, 2005

Federal Communication Commission
Attn: Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Complaints
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington D.C. 20554

Dear FCC,

The VRS (Video Relay Server) is big problem because when I called my family members for such as emergency; or talking to friends; and order for food. Sometimes I use VRS but I have to wait in about 20 minutes to connect with a VRS operator.

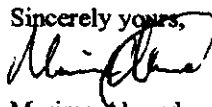
Connecting to a VRS operator must be fast not slow that I don't like. But I thought it is great that commutating with the operator through ASL. I would to suggest the VRS should to fix or change new technology to help VRS better.

I like to use VP-100 as I can talk to another person directly if she has VP-100. VRS use same VP-100 but they are different because I will not see hearing person on another screen. While on VP-100, I can see my friends or whoever I talk to on the screen.

What's more, time is so fast in connecting between people who have to the same use VP-100 for only. But I wonder why we could not connect to other people who use D-link easily like VP-100. Suppose if my friend uses D-link and there is a possible emergency and I have to call my D-link friend, it will be hard for me to call because of different way of dialing.

I think that we should use VP-100, and D- link both no matter what and can be able to talk to any VRS. It should be better to involve VP-100, and D- link, and VRS to work with one-way system. That's all easy to save time to connect up with each other. And add more VRS operators as there are few working now.

I hope that you will support us and solve this problem.

Sincerely yours,

Merime Ahmed

CC: Senator Barbara A. Mikulski
Senator Paul Sarbanes
House of Representative Chris Van Hollen